

IN THE APPLICATION
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FOR A
GAMING DEVICE

5
GAMING DEVICE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

10 This application is a continuation-in-part of pending application Serial No. 09/988,794 (Attys. Docket No. 19453.00) filed November 20, 2001, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/251,427, filed December 6, 2000.

15 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

20 The present invention generally relates to gaming devices. More specifically, the present invention is drawn to a pinball-slot machine combination.

2. DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

"Gaming" or the participation of people in wagering games is probably as old as civilization and is world-wide in scope.

5 In the last half of the twentieth century, the proliferation of casinos in the United States alone is evidence that games of chance are still enjoyed by large numbers of people. To maintain and enhance client interest, casino operators are always searching for new and interesting gaming formats. The
10 present invention proposes a new and exciting game of chance, which involves a merger of the widely popular pinball and slot machine games.

Variations of pinball gaming devices are shown in U.S. Patents numbers Des. 251,515 (Richter), Des. 260,409 (Tanaka et
15 al.) and Des. 337,790 (Gottlieb et al.). These Patents merely show ornamental designs of pinball machines.

The most popular gaming device is probably the slot machine, variations of which are disclosed in U.S. Patent numbers 4,508,345 (Okada), 5,010,995 (Okada), British Patent 2
20 083 936A, and British Patent 2 182 186A. Only the well-known reel game may be played on the above cited slot machines.

U.S. Patent number 4,518,098 (Fleischer) shows a vending machine designed to appear as a slot machine.

U.S. Patent number 3,853,318 (Cagan) discloses a combination dart and pinball device. There appears to be no provision in the Cagan device for inserting coins for wagering.

U.S. Patents numbers 5,630,586 (Lowden), 5,997,400 (Seelig et al.), 6,089,976 (Schneider et al.), 6,089,978 (Adams) and British Patent number 2 201 821A all disclose combination gaming devices. However, none incorporate a pinball-slot machine merger.

U.S. Patent number 5,882,261 (Adams) shows a gaming device that incorporates a pinball-type game with a slot machine. The device of the instant patent differs from the proposed invention in arrangement and mode of play.

U.S. Patent number 5,342,049 (Wichinsky et al.) discloses a combination pinball-slot machine. Note that when in the pinball mode, Wichinsky et al. contemplate re-spinning the slot reels instead of directly adding credits.

None of the above inventions and patents, taken either singly or in combination, is seen to disclose the invention as will subsequently be described and claimed in the instant invention.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention, dubbed "Slotball", is a combination of a slot machine and a pinball machine. As presently contemplated, the top section of the invention replicates a conventional reel-type slot machine, whereas the bottom section of the device is a conventional pinball machine. The slotball machine is designed with solid sides and a stable base to prevent tilting, which commonly occurs during pinball play. A single handle allows a player to spin the slot reels, or launch the pinball into action. A button may also be utilized to spin the slot reels. The slotball machine is equipped with various indicators and coin insert slots which allow a player to initiate play and monitor the results.

The objectives of the game are to win credits, win the slot jackpot, or to achieve the slotball bonus round to win extra credits. Play is initiated when the machine is in the slot mode. Play in the pinball mode can only be achieved if the slotball icon appears as will be explained below.

Accordingly, the instant invention provides a new and exciting gaming apparatus that combines the characteristics of two of the most popular game machines, namely the slot and

pinball machines. The invention also provides for improved elements and arrangements thereof in a method and apparatus for the purposes described which are inexpensive, dependable and fully effective in accomplishing their intended purposes.

5 The present invention will become readily apparent upon further review of the following specification and drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

10 Figure 1 is a perspective view of a gaming device according to the present invention.

Figure 2 is a top view of a gaming device according to the present invention.

15 Figure 3 is a side view of a gaming device according to the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

20 The gaming apparatus of the present invention is generally indicated at 10 as illustrated in Figures 1-3. Apparatus 10 includes walls 12 which support and house conventional mechanical and electro-mechanical mechanisms 15 for operating a

combination slot-pinball machine game. Walls 12 are designed to form a solid base to prevent the apparatus from being easily tilted. Although walls are illustrated as the support means, it is obvious that sturdy legs (or the like) could be utilized if desired.

The upper section 14 of the gaming apparatus is designed to appear and function as a conventional slot machine and includes slot reels 16 and indicator lights 18, 18a, 18b. Indicator 18 gives a reading for credits played; 18a indicates credits won in the pinball mode; 18b indicates total credits available. Indicator light 20 is the winner paid indicator. Slot reels 16 exhibit the standard payline and slot icons (sevens, bars, cherries, etc.). The instant invention however, requires at least one reel to employ an icon with the words "slot ball" inscribed thereon as shown at 16a. A light 19 is adapted to flash to indicate either when a machine error occurs or when a player has hit the jackpot.

The lower section 21 of the apparatus is designed to appear and function as a pinball machine. Lower section 21 includes a control panel that incorporates the following functions. A coin slot 22 is provided for inserting coins or casino tokens to initiate the apparatus game mechanisms. Push button 24 is

utilized to place a maximum credit bet. Push button 24a may be used to activate the slot reels. Button 24b is employed when a player wishes to input the amount of credits bet (from one to the maximum amount). Button 24c is used when a player decides to terminate play and wishes to cash out. Button 24d is a service button. For convenience, a pay scale 26 is inscribed on the front wall of the apparatus. A tray 28 for catching the player's winnings is positioned immediately beneath the pay scale. A handle 30 may be employed to activate the slot reels or launch the pinball when in pinball mode. Buttons 32 functions to move the pinball flippers (not shown) as is conventional in the art.

To initiate play, the player inserts coins or gaming tokens into coin slot 22. The player may bet any desired amount. However, the player cannot qualify for the slot jackpot and the slotball bonus round if maximum credits are not bet. Handle 30, button 24 or button 24a is then manipulated to start slot reels 16. If the slotball icon 16a appears on the payline and the maximum amount of credits have been bet, the machine will automatically switch into the pinball mode. The player will then be able to win extra credits playing pinball. Once the pinball mode is activated, the machine will automatically place

a pinball into the launch position. Handle 30 is employed to launch the pinball. As in ordinary pinball games, the player manipulates the pinball by pressing buttons 32, which buttons cause the flippers (not shown) to direct the pinball to strike credit adding or credit subtracting sensors. When the pinball goes out of play, the game reverts to the slot mode. The player has a choice of continuing to play by repeating the above process or to cash out.

It is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the sole embodiments described above, but encompasses any and all embodiments within the scope of the following claims.